

Form Letter

I am writing regarding the draft Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan 2008 for Reducing, Mitigating, and Controlling Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico and Improving Water Quality in the Mississippi River Basin that is currently out for public comment. The Dead Zone is an environmental disaster that needs to be brought to the nation's attention. Regarding the Plan, I would first like to say that I am pleased that the Task Force is taking the most current science and applying it to the Plan. Overall, the goals of the Plan are commendable, but the plan falls short in other areas:

1. The 2001 plan had a section that outlined a time-line for agencies to achieve accomplishments in order to reach the over-arching 2015 goal. It is troubling that this plan removed that feature. If the Task Force is serious about attempting to reach the ultimate goal, it must outline concrete interim steps in order to have any hope of accomplishing the significant changes necessary to reduce the size of the Dead Zone.
2. There is an over-arching need for funding to fully implement the Plan. One of the goals for this Plan must be to submit budgets and funding requests to Congress and the President until the Plan is adequately funded. It is not enough to say that new programs need to be funded, this document should outline how new funds will be acquired.
3. More emphasis should be given to the adoption of numeric nitrogen and phosphorus water quality criteria. This plan should provide a concrete time-line for when the states must adopt criteria. Also EPA should state when they will develop criteria for the Mississippi River and off-shore waters. Since these waters are interstate or national waters, EPA has an obligation to set criteria for these waters that will be protective.

Thank you for considering these comments. Once again, while the Plan did include some improvements over the previous one, there is still much work that must be done by the states and federal agencies involved.